

IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

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Abstract

The paper approaches the paradigmatic changes of the current economic situation, in the context of post-modernism and its challenges, which reconsiders human society according to new criteria. One of the characteristics of post-modernism is the development of information and communication techniques, which allowed the occurrence of the „knowledge-based society” whose consequence is the effervescence of fast barrier-free knowledge, absolute freedom of debates, equality of opportunities before the virtual space, but also the relativisation of information, the increases of the danger of manipulation, misleading, or even falsification of the truth. New challenges occur thus in social life, and especially in the economic one, where the human factor becomes increasingly important for the evolution of society. In this context, education seems to play the decisive part, but an education focused on real values, where the truth and the ethics prevail before efficiency and performance.

Key words: postmodernism, trasnmodernism, know-how, development, human resources, education,

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I. INTRODUCTION

This crossroads of millennia is characterised, from the economic perspective, by a mind-turning whirlpool of events, monetary incoherence, stress of inequalities, decline of educational and health systems, deterioration of the relations among states, spectacular collapses of stock exchanges, economic crises, thus a series of changes reflecting the necessity of the occurrence of new development patterns, new values that the human society should embrace. The preoccupation of the specialists in the economic domain seems to take the road towards a new paradigm, new coordinates of society, relying on man as angular stone of life, supreme expression of conscience and spirituality. T.Brăilean, in "The new economy. The end of certainties", stresses the fact that the economic "imprints more and more both the action and the conscience of men, speaks about us, represents us, and is one of the most faithful expressions of our identity and evolution." Ethics in economy is more and more frequently approached, the need for finding authentic landmarks being considered essential for the survival of the human species. D. Dăianu approaches thus the economic crisis, public institutions and their evolution, from the perspective of ethics, concluding that the entire society seems to lose its moral verticality, in the name of profit and efficiency, but the result is far from being the expected one. "A business ethics, based on trust, respect of commercial partners, honesty and transparency is thus a *sine qua non* condition for the good deployment of the market economy" (Dăianu, 2009). Actually, even back in 2006 he anticipated that there is a tentative of capitalism „to take over, by its action, the full control over human and non-human nature" (Dăianu, 2006). „Mankind has progressed as system only as much as it has progressed from the psychological point of view", according to Khanna P., who stresses once again the importance of the human factor in the evolution of society. In "The moral capitalism" Stephen Young encourages human beings „to identify the values guiding their actions, to reanalyse the consequences of choices, to understand the human relations and those who may be affected by the choices made", underlining at the same time the importance of private investments in research and education as premise for a corrected social evolution. „All the science of economy is, in the end, an economic study of good and evil", concludes T. Sedlacek in "The economy of good and evil" (2012), stressing the need for approaching economy from a human perspective, as the economy is nothing else than the final affirmation of the evolution and development of man's creativity and inventiveness.

In order to correctly comprehend the present economic phenomenon, it is necessary thus to have a precise identification of the main coordinates in society, of the exiting dogmas, of the social archaeology where the individual and the community manifest themselves. It is about postmodernism, whose pregnant manifestation seems to be „the knowledge-based society". This type of society based on the Internet, assures the participation of all individuals of the planet in the interpretation of reality and the modification of the vision about the world, the exceeding of the limits imposed by the prior modernism, as a result of the multiple and fluid influences which have rapidly changed the perspective of human becoming, changing the thinking and vision on the world

in a radical and completely new manner. In this context we need "behaviour rules accepted by all, which could be possible only in a knowledge-based and perhaps conscience-based society" (Drăgănescu, 2001).

II. POSTMODERNISM

2.1. Defining elements of postmodernism

The current epoch is characterised by a comprehensive cultural dimension, a true cultural, holistic and dynamic paradigm: postmodernism.

Postmodernism is defined as "a revolution of the individual before the Universe in the sense of the affirmation of the individual and the deconstruction of any structure" (Sandu, 2009), with an important ethic-axiology component. This dimension manifests itself on multiple planes: philosophic, scientific, epistemological, in arts and politics, with ample reverberations in the area of the social and the economic. In all these domains, communication claims its central place, as means of perpetuation of the era's dominant values, of social interaction and transfer of information from one point to another. „The post-modern condition seems to have infected almost any arena of intellectual endeavours" (Brown, 1993), originating from an ample process of *deconstruction* of the representation structures. It is a deconstruction of the hierarchic opposition: feminine/masculine; good/evil; beautiful/ugly; cause/effect, light/darkness, etc., all the above losing their real substrate and becoming optional, depending on the preferences of the moment. It is a destabilisation of essential oppositions from the metaphysic thinking, often triggering the loss of confidence in absolute values, their levelling and confusion in the axiologic representation, with consequences on social evolution. Postmodern deconstruction regards man as a component unit of a holistic system, independent on family, religious or ethnic community. The belonging to a reference group is made depending on immediate interests and momentary perspectives. The ethics of love, as approach and endeavour of human quality tends to replace the old philosophic conceptions, without the consistency and coherence of the latter.

Fragmentation is another feature of postmodernism. The basis of this philosophy still relies on humanism, but the latter is focused on a freedom different from that explained by Sartre at the end of the previous century, as it focuses on differentiation, on the ethics of difference and freedom. Considered to be "the era of minimalism" (Lipovetsky, 1996) or the society of generalised permissiveness (Cristea, 2005), postmodernism relies on permissive, tolerant and pragmatic principles. Social cohabitation is considered legitimate, but so is individual happiness also, so that systems occur which superficialise guilt and contort morals. The focus on values such as absolute freedom or full happiness gives birth to imperatives with slightly blurry dimensions; if something is not clearly forbidden, it means it is allowed, or to do no harm does not automatically mean to do good. If the axiological core of postmodernism is finding happiness, the effort of reaching it is considered legitimate, even if this supposes consumerism, abuse of alcohol, drugs or other actions justifying the obtaining of pleasure, considered many a time a synonym of happiness.. Ostentatious individuality, generalised permissiveness, lack of inhibitions and establishment of minimum cohabitation norms, lack of real social responsibility and deprivatisation of personal life are socially translated into value instabilities and a strong impasse of equilibrium.

Fragmentation originates from the „need" for the existence of thousands of foundations, associations, parties, alliances, organisations whose actions are multiple and from diverse perspectives, realising an ambiguous and fluid mosaic of results. Paradoxically, it approaches ethics in close connection with the borderless society and globalisation, ignoring the cultural diversity which interprets this concept in sometimes opposed manners, with major consequences on social stability. This is due to the approach of the future from multiple directions as mere potentialities, which are based on human freedom, the unifying trend specific to modernity being confronted with the post-modern opposite atomising trend.

"Freedom is for postmodernists the foundation of the difference. The right to be different certifies our level of reality. In other words, the more I exist, the more diversely I manifest myself" (Sandu, 2009). It is obvious in this respect that the harmony of the world is considered a tyranny, and order and discipline are replaced without equivocation by personal promotion.

Reality is built by a multiplicity of discourses, replacing thus the ontos by the praxis.

Consumism, the third feature, is explained by the higher satisfaction of needs, but also of self-esteem and appreciation, of joining local or organisational culture, but in reality it is a much more complex phenomenon, as consumism derives first of all from the social standards to which man tends to get aligned and the pressure of economic culture, which lures to rapid and costly consumption (Lebow, 1955).

Maslow's need for self-update sends the individual into an infinite spiral, where man, attempting to remain anchored in his social corpus, becomes narcissistic and socially destructive, as money is the only god he worships and for which he offers his last impulse of energy. In the absence of clear value landmarks, consumism connects the individual to needs and problems that are often artificial, with which he tends to cope. The search

for human fulfilment in desiderata of consumist nature determines the orientation to the mirage of material satiety and abundance, of immediate gain, of fulfilment of artificial needs. The material ideals and the pecuniary endeavours are comprised in one single mirage of existential success, homo sapiens turning into homo consumus. He has one single reasons for existing: the accumulation of assets, many a time useless and ephemerons. Their obtaining potentiates the apparition of other desires, and this spiral leads man down a road without any finality or spiritual fulfilment.

Finally the fourth characteristic, the most visible, is that of the *exponential development of information and communication technique*. The human coexistence with technicity is so extended that the machine becomes an extension of the body and mind. It is in this context that the term of virtual space appears, as a new dimension, interpreted in a fragmented, deconstructive and consumerist manner, and human society, poignantly manifesting itself in and by the „virtual reality" also turns into „knowledge-based society". The development of informational technology is perfectly aligned with the features of the post-modern epoch or even determines them, using for instance „the metaphor of the window, in the opening of the virtual space, to underline the possibility of the ego multiplication to the infinite similar to the opening of several windows on the computer screen"(Rotaru, 2010).

"Postmodernism questions all modern values. Science as authority in the Enlightenment is dethroned, by renouncing to the idea that it is built on a solid foundation of observable facts. If in the apparition of modern culture an important part was played by the printing techniques, in the building of the postmodernism this role is taken over by the mass communication means. Thus, the image replaces the word and we pass from logocentrism to iconocentrism."(Iacobescu, 2006)

2.2. Communication in postmodernism and knowledge-based society

In order to correctly analyse the features of communication in this epoch, we must underline the paradigm of knowledge and its implications in post-modern society

Post-modern communication technology produces a revolution in knowledge, both grace to its unprecedented vastness, allowing knowledge in a largely disseminated manner, and as form of manifestation – without limits of interpretation - which sketches fluid and fractured perspectives. In fact, the analysis of knowledge triggers postmodernism – its core idea being that the „absolute"m definitive and immutable truth does not exist, and thus indetermination replaces the eternal and immutable values (Cărtărescu, 1999).

Postmodernism provokes a true collapse in the hierarchy of knowledge, strongly criticising the scientific discoveries of modernism, revealing the deficiencies and weaknesses thereof, and proclaiming at the same time „the plurality of interpretations, freedom in the use of language and cultural relativism"(Clitan, 2000).

In principle, postmodernism considers the universe to be deprived of a centre, and the „dominant values are: pluralism, relativisation of values, ideological ecumenism, the practical and impure character of literary forms and the replacement of the idea of history by that of simultaneity and synchronicity" (Diaconu, 2002). That is why, in the act of knowledge, one has to accept the idea of relativity, of the dependence of reality on the landmark, which may be even in motion, which may trigger an unobservable reality. The truth may thus be different, depending on the point from which we look at the exterior, having „personal and individual valences" (Z. Bauman, 2000), reason why, most of the time, it is replaced by experience. It is only at the infinity that reality can be seen as it is , without subjective limitations, which leads us to the conclusion that "the world is only an infinite potentiality of convertibility, transformations of processuality" (Karnooough, 1995).

The conclusion is that reality does not exist, it is only a mental construction, determined by the ideas and perceptions of each. It is man who makes reality be this way and not otherwise, take place now and not some other time. The French philosopher Lyotard denies the meta narratives existing in the modern epoch, showing that „meta narratives no longer legitimate knowledge in post-modern society. The speculative emancipative stories lose the credibility they had in modernism. Many regret in postmodernism the results of the disappearance of narrative knowledge. Scientific knowledge is only a language game endowed with its own rules, but incapable to regulate other games of language".

In other words, a certain story, built by people (a theory, an economic pattern) may or not be true, but of if the people listening to them believe in them, they function as if they were true. The community who believes in such a story is coherent and stable. This is how the great human civilisations were formed (the Christian civilisation, for instance).

"We become what we chose to do. The ego is an activity. The post-modern pandite says: We are only what we describe ourselves to be. The ego is not a substance, not even an activity, but only a floating construct depending on the language it uses. If we are great poets, we create a new modality of expression or change the language of our society Freud for instance was a great poet. We made an entire society talk about human reality in terms such as the Oedipus's complex or id, ego and superego. Jung created the collective unconscious. There is no modality of knowing if any of these things does exist. But we use language to describe ourselves, and this becomes the truth"(Ciocan, 2014).

As knowledge is, as we have already mentioned, unlimited in interpretation, it is „constrained to refer to language, as it is the reality of a given subject”, the entire world being realised through the „symbolic interactions of diverse individuals’ world maps” (Sandu, 2009).

Scientific knowledge, as part of knowledge, used to rely in modernism on hypotheses, postulates, and theories offering scientific criteria in the respective discourse. There was in this domain a hierarchy of scientific truth, by which the result of the respective endeavour was validated. In postmodernism this working manner is harshly criticised, knowledge being „made of opinions, customs, prejudice, ignorance” (Lyotard, 1993). Reality has several levels, each reality having its own logic with its own complexity. Besides, there is a „potential reality” (Heisenberg, apud Capra F., 2004), which annuls the conception of reality as objectivity, approaches it from a subjective perspective and changes thus the reference point in an abrupt manner. In other words, there is no pure reality, only the experience and interaction between an observer and an observed.

In this case, science appears as an agglomeration of explanatory models by which, in a consensual manner, reality is understood. Without deepening the complex and fluid issue of knowledge in postmodernism, one may conclude that, due to subjectivity, language becomes essential.

Postmodernism combats unity, considering it utopian, the world being in fact a juxtaposition of fragmentations, experimentation, subjectivity and spontaneity. Reality may be different and interpretable. Everything is questioned and even the interpretation of the truth becomes negotiable. Hence the belief that the entire world is a construct.

Reality may be known only through language, which becomes essential, as it is the only way in which the experience of reality may be realised (outside the language, reality becomes unintelligible).

Thus, knowledge drops to the second place in postmodernism, the first place being taken over by communication.

In the classic understanding, as means of human interaction, communication has a relational dimension and a community one, being realised verbally, nonverbally, or paraverbally. By communication one transmits information – representations of reality, personal reflections, mental projections „through a precise and structured set of symbols or through devices, such as those of automatic computation”(wikipedia). For efficiency, it is important to underline that the set of symbols or signs transmitted through information must have the same meaning both on the sender and on the receiver’s side, irrespective of the distance between the two and of other physical, social or economic characteristics.

In post-modern society, communication is characterised by a steady endeavour of virtualisation of the social space, determined by the communication technology, by which the physical space becomes unimportant the major importance being that of the Internet connection speed, the autonomy capacity of the phone devices, the band width etc.

The space of communication is no longer real, but virtual, with consequences related to alienation from physical reality. Suler J. even analyses (apud Sandu, 2009) the possibility of the total virtualisation of human relations, irrespective of the human need that has to be satisfied: food, clothing, household comfort, socialisation, spiritual development, as well as commerce, payment of taxes, culture, art, love or even sexual needs. In this manner the dependency on the Internet occurs, already considered a form of pathology, but the future development without restrictions, the facility of connection, the universalisation of this type of communication all create the premises that in a relative near future the virtual space simply becomes a usual alternative to live. In one single decade, the development of communication through the Internet technology produced an unprecedented cultural revolution marked by positive aspects: free, unhindered access to information, equality of opportunities before the virtual space, refusal of any limitation, which could be translated by the principles of absolute freedom, tolerance before the difference, of any nature it might be. Thus, one debates without obstacles major problems of society such as: protection of the environment, protection of animals, issues of physical and psychic abuse, euthanasia, drugs problems or humanitarian actions, political issues or cultural events. New possibilities occur related to the access to materials from libraries, one can contemplate areas of the earth to which no one could have had access otherwise, one may valorise opportunities irrespective of time and space and above all there is a universalisation of human rights, the positivation of human nature prevailing in the virtual space. The user of modern technology is an active participant, who sees what he wants, when he wants and what he wants; he can find out details, opinions, debates on a certain problem, interactivity being maximum and without limitations, exhibiting immense flexibility (chats, forums, networks) and allowing maximum results with minimum costs. And last but not least the use of images increases the impact of each piece of information, enhancing the interest by valorising the message.

On the other hand, the characteristics of postmodernism are best highlighted in modern technology, where fragmentation and deconstruction fluidise information, relativise it and multiply it, triggering the danger of disinformation, manipulation, suggestions and even falsification. There are sites propagating certain brainwash means, with noxious effects especially on young generation.

The vastness of information that may be accessed by a single click, as well as the amplexity of the Internet use (it is appreciated that around 1/3 of the world population currently use this technology) justify the

occurrence of the term of knowledge-based society as an „unprecedented dissemination to all the citizens by new means, using with priority the internet and electronic card, and the utilisation of the learning methods by electronic procedures (e-learning) (Drăgănescu, 2001).

This does not mean however a banal repetition of the information collected , but a conversion thereof in the human conscience so that, based on these processes, creativity and innovation could manifest freely and actively.

The use of the universal knowledge fund, in a free, unlimited manner in time and space, transforms the individual and organisation, on the behaviour, ethic, attitude plane, in a definitive and imperative manner. We witness the radical modification of human physic processes, systems of faith and values, affective and sensorial, registries.

The development opportunities are implicit and explicit, so that the eschatology of human efforts could manifest itself in an open and permissive environment. The human coexistence accesses the sometime sordid reality in a virtual universe, where one finds cultural, intellectual, artistic answers to everything related to the condition of the postmodern individual.

This effervescence of rapid and unfenced knowledge replaces in many cases the criterion of the truth by that of performance, existence and efficiency.

The paradox of the knowledge-based society is that whereas the industrial era discovered technics through scientific development, at present the scientific development seems to be discovered by means of the omnipresent technics.

III. THE HUMAN FACTOR IN THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED SOCIETY

In the context of the current society, the real development may be reached only by the constant evolution of human resources, as a decisive factor of progress and innovation. Nothing can be realised in an informatised and technologised society, without the complex training of the human factor, whose intellect and creative capacity are the evidence of the system and the connecting bridge between the virtual and the real. The realisation of the change by accumulation of knowledge and experiences is the defining strategy of human training so that the creative search for solutions could be a process of establishing the cognitive and willful resonance for the human being focused on professional enhancement.

All the achievements of the present society, innovative processes, high-performance technologies, commercial success, rely on human expertise, the knowledge put into practice, the creation and innovation as sources of growth and development, so that the human resource becomes the key factor in the future economic and social evolution. Inventiveness, as engine of development, must be approached as a capacity of the human factor to take leaps in the expression of reality, to transfer knowledge acquired into something else, paradigmatically , to modify and interpret in a new manner what he has previously acquired and known. The obtaining of fundamental competences supposes on the one hand pragmatic specialised narrow competences, and on the other hand communication ethic competences, where self-esteem combines with collective appreciation , and the set of organisational values should inspire and motivate. In the context of uniqueness and originality we must acquire a system of norms and values positively enhancing intellectual expansion and somatic resonance, as a combination of mind, soul and body on a level where the human beings could express themselves and at the same time to take the road toward creating and satisfying human needs. The human factor must be educated to approach their activity from the perspective of creative permissiveness, of transdisciplinary vision, of the use of modern technology for productive and utilitarian purposes (Nastase& Hodoroaba, 2010).

The theory of self-concept postulates that the individual acts depending on the idea he has about himself. This idea develops in each individual starting from the contacts with his environment and comprising: the real self (what is real); the self-image (what I think I am); the ideal self (what I aspire to be); the self-reflection (what I think I am through the eyes of the others) (Minica, 2015).

All these desiderata may be reached only by an economic education adapted to postmodern society. In fact, if all the branches of present sciences have undergone major modifications in the paradigm of knowledge, education remained mostly in Romania faithful to classicism, the consequences being negative from all points of view. It is absolutely necessary thus to trigger a change of the vision on education, especially in the economic education, as a modality of correct approach of the knowledge-based society.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Today's society undergoes complex and abrupt modifications, which rapidly change the angle of the economic perspective, the technology and information constituting key factors permanently remodelling and redefining reality. On the basis of these elements, however, we find the human being, as a combination of personal imagination with collective will.

If the agrarian society took ten thousand years to reach its peak, the industrial society needed seven hundred years to exhaust its possibilities, modern society needed several hundred years for that, post-modern society needed only several decades to radically transform world economy, social and personal life of the present. It is even appreciated that a new society starts to become apparent – the transmodern society – which restructures the present mentality, attempting to accommodate the pluralism of worlds from the postmodern with a holistic vision, where all the social, economic dimensions become spiritualised and turned into a network universe. Thus, one foresees the exit from the welfare society and the apparition of the network society, of a society of interdependencies, of interconnections, of social reconstructions by which the obsessive individuality could be replaced by the spiritual community. In this context, man, who has by birth the capacity of „self updating” (Rogers, 1966), must, by means of education, cultivate this inclination, in order to adapt and perform in this society, whose speed of deployment increases permanently. If the society becomes of the „network type”, it is important to underline that the human factor is the one generating questions in the system created and at the same time answers within the built networks. The entire society manifests itself socially depending on the manner in which the individuals transmit and interpret their messages. That is why ethics has deep implications, especially on the economic level, where the results are the fastest and most visible. It is education that, eventually, shapes man as he will manifest himself in the economic, social, political or cultural plane. His very creative and innovative capacity depends on the manner in which these abilities are encouraged and developed by means of economic education. Economic education becomes thus the avant-garde of present society, the almost exclusive element of human evolution. The manner in which this desideratum may be reached will constitute the topic of a future paper.

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